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Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Hi. I actually like Microsoft, and I think it's a good idea to settle the DOJ case. But NOT before asking Microsoft to face the many charges against them, and stop to think about them like the smart people they are. Charges, as my rabid colleagues point out, like:

Have you ever been burned by a Microsoft product that did not act the way it was supposed to? How about a 3rd party product that did not work on a MS operating system like it was supposed to? Have you ever read the EULA for Frontpage? Did you know that you are NOT allowed to use Frontpage to create sites that say anything negative about Microsoft? Have you ever read the EULA for Visual C++? Did you know that you are not allowed to use Visual C++ to create an application that works on a non-MS operating system? Do you not like these things and do you not like Microsoft's non-competitive ways and plans for world domination?

My colleague, who is a very very smart programmer, is obviously upset. And Microsoft, he has a point. Why do you act in a way that makes people who buy your product not like you? Is this a healthy attitude, discouraging your customers? Everytime you decide to start plotting for world domination, you lose. In fact, the smartest idea you had was your original idea - to license an operating system, rather than selling it outright. Brilliant! Brilliant idea! God, I wish I'd thought of it.

So many times you make great products! So many successes, like Visual Basic, etc., are an American tradition. You change the world with your innovation, and your organization. You take a topic like an e-book, and you step over the many fumbling people out there waving sketchy business plans, and you run down the field with it. My Pocket PC - I love my Pocket PC. I want a Tablet PC. I want to leave desktop computing behind, and go mobile and wireless! My Internet Explorer, my Outlook Express... Microsoft, you can be the American Dream in motion.

But some things you do are really embarrassing to the tradition of great computer software.

1. You began the tradition of charging customers for mistakes you made in your software, by cutting out free technical support, and 1-800 numbers. Shameful. Why don't you go sit by Ron Lay for 15 minutes and think about this. Why don't you stick up for your products by saying, "We bet we can handle the volume, because we know we designed it well." Well, OK, I know that's a lot to ask. But surely you could give away a little tech support? Even in jail you get one phone call free.
2. You hide everything in .dlls so that our computers are black boxes. So when they act up, we have to pay to call you, to find out it's a "known problem". Tsk, tsk. Would it be so terrible to tell us what it is, and what it does?
3. You release buggy software, when if any company has the money to thoroughly check their software, it's gotta be you. I know that perfection is

probably unattainable, but come on - the FBI has to send America a memo on your point releases now?

4. I always thought it was fine that you include Internet Explorer with Windows. If Netscape made an operating system, they would have too! But do you have to throw tantrums and punish your partner vendors for wanting to include Netscape in their specs? What's next - do you want your own third-world country to control like some tinpot leader? Get over it, Microsoft. Stop being so infernally petty - you're the 600 lb. gorilla. Choose to be handsome about it. Let your vendors make their own decisions, and you can thus concentrate on making IE continually world class. Microsoft, you're golden, because you had, and continue to have, great ideas. And you're smart. You don't need to "kill" the competition. In fact, you need competition in the United States - it's the law. When Apple was going belly-up, you had to prop them up. Because you need competition. The world is moving toward application servers, mobile connectedness everywhere, personal robotics, and an information and learning universe. There is opportunity to be excellent. To even - sometimes - do the right thing. Hackers will continue to plague you, because hackers follow what everybody has - what everybody uses. And right now, that's Microsoft. Microsoft, grow up. Does IBM continually act like the kid who wants ALL the pizza at the party? Well, yeah, probably. But they're more subtle about it. Please. While you have those dreams of grandeur and glory, remember to use finesse.